

# CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAMS





## Writing for Laughs

Suggested Ages	Jr. High and High School
Suggested Reading	<u>Drew Carey</u> by Ann Gaines <u>Whoopi Goldberg</u> by William Caper <u>Bill Cosby: Family Funny Man</u> by Larry Kettelkamp <u>Adam Sandler</u> by David Seidman <u>Jim Carrey</u> by Mary Hughes
Suggested Websites	<a href="http://humorlinks.com">http://humorlinks.com</a> <a href="http://www.kidkomey.com">www.kidkomey.com</a> <a href="http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/2549/wlgame.shtml">http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/2549/wlgame.shtml</a> (Has skit ideas like those used on "Whose Line Is It Anyway?")
Materials	Pen and Paper Optional: Random items like those used in "Whose Line Is It Anyway?"
Program	<p>Talk to the young adults about the lives of various stand-up comedians and how they have achieved success. Play a clip from a Bill Cosby stand-up video such as "Bill Cosby, Himself". Also let the teens listen to a comedy album like "The Best of Ray Stevens". (Make sure to listen to the excerpt before you allow the young adults to listen considering some comedians have jokes that are inappropriate for young adults.)</p> <p>Have all the participants write ideas for comedy skits on pieces of paper. Get volunteers from the audience to improvise these ideas in front of the group. Allow anyone who volunteers to participate, but do not push more timid young adults to perform. Everyone will participate by writing their ideas down.</p> <p>Or have the participants volunteer to do a short stand-up act before the group. They can work together to write the jokes before performing them. The young adults can vote on the funniest joke or they can borrow some from a joke book. You can give an award to the best performance.</p> <p>After the program talk about the difficulties faced by stand-up comedians. How hard is it to write good jokes or come up with jokes on the spot? What goes into the performance besides the jokes that make it funny? What makes someone funny to begin with?</p>

## **Creative Writers' Coffee House**

Suggested Ages	High School
Suggested Reading	<u>Brave New Voices: The Youth Speaks Guide to Teaching Spoken Word Poetry</u> by Scott Herndon <u>Works for Children and Young Adults</u> by Langston Hughes <u>Young Adult Poetry</u> by Rachel Schwedt <u>Real Toads in Imaginary Gardens: Suggestions and Starting Points for Young Creative Writers</u> by Stephen Phillip Policoff <u>Outsiders and Others</u> (American Teen Writer Series) by Kathryn Kulpa <u>Eighth Grade Writers</u> by Christine Lord
Suggested Websites	<a href="http://www.defpoetryjam.com">www.defpoetryjam.com</a> <a href="http://www.writes.org/">www.writes.org/</a> <a href="http://www.highschooljournalism.org">www.highschooljournalism.org</a>
Decorations	Keep lighting low. You want to create the feel of a real coffee house, so tables should be small. Place them in no particular order all throughout the room. If you do not have a space for tables, have everyone sit on the floor.
Materials Needed	Paper and pencils for writing Books on poetry, short stories, essays and creative writing Refreshments
Program	Once a week for 5 to 6 weeks have a "coffee house" for young writers. Allow the young adults to read their work in front of the group. Have a local writer or college creative writing teacher come talk one week on the writing process. Have writing sessions on different types of creative writing (poetry, short stories, essays, etc.).
Sponsors	<p>You may want to consider working with a local restaurant to host the program there.</p> <p>Contact your local coffee shop, restaurant or grocery store, and ask them to donate drinks and light refreshments. Coffee, cokes and cookies would be plenty.</p>

## Poetry

Suggested Ages	Jr. High and High School
Suggested Reading	<u>Jump Ball: A Basketball Season in Poems</u> by Mel Glenn <u>Wachale!: Poetry and Prose about Growing Up Latino</u> by Ilan Stavans “Song of Myself” in <u>Leaves of Grass</u> by Walt Whitman “The Laboratory” by Robert Browning <u>Where the Sidewalk Ends</u> by Shel Silverstein
Suggested Websites	<a href="http://www.teenink.com">www.teenink.com</a> <a href="http://www.poetryteachers.com">www.poetryteachers.com</a> <a href="http://www.gigglepoetry.com">www.gigglepoetry.com</a> (for younger teens)
Materials	Paper, pens or colored pencils
Program	<p>Help the young adults discover different types of poetry by reading a few examples from the selections above. If you do not have these books, you may use any poetry as long as it is interesting and diverse. Explain that there are many different types of poetry, and allow the teens to try to write the various types. You may want to ask them to read the poetry aloud, or put it in a book to be displayed in the library. Let them have fun with the poetry, and allow the young adults to express themselves in their poetry. Remember: Poetry is an expression of ourselves and our feelings; it can be extremely intimate to the writer and should never be judged.</p> <p><b>Haiku:</b> A 3 lined Japanese poem usually about nature. 1<sup>st</sup> line – 5 syllables, 2<sup>nd</sup> line – 7 syllables, 3<sup>rd</sup> line – 5 syllables</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The trees are changing Red, Yellow, Orange and Gold Like falling rainbows</p> <p><b>Limerick:</b> Humorous nonsense verse with lines 1, 2 and 5 rhyming and lines 3 and 4 rhyming.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Mondays are never much fun No time to play in the sun No time to sleep in Schools about to begin I can't wait for the day to be done</p>

**Acrostic:** A poem where the first letter of each line spells a word that can be read vertically

Putting words together  
One after another  
Emotions flow out of  
Me

**Cinquain:** A five line poem. 1<sup>st</sup> line – 1 word, 2<sup>nd</sup> line – 2 words that describe line 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> line – 3 words that show action, 4<sup>th</sup> line – 4 words that convey feelings, 5<sup>th</sup> line – refers to line one

Snow  
Cold, wet  
It falls quietly  
And disappoints the child  
Powder

**Free Verse:** Has rhythm but is not confined by rhyme or length

**Epitaph:** A brief poem inscribed on a tombstone  
A tomb now suffices for him  
whom the world was not enough  
(Alexander the Great)

**Shape Poetry:** The poetry takes on the shape of its subject

Rain  
D     D  
R     R  
O     O  
P     P  
S and S until it Stops.

## **Creative Writing-Six Weeks Short**

Suggested Ages	Jr. High and High School
Suggested Reading	Teen Writers Workshop by Janet Dickey, Young Adult Assistant, Cuyahoga County Public Library Website <a href="http://dbldog.com/teenwriters.html">http://dbldog.com/teenwriters.html</a>
Program	<p>The basic goal of Teen Writers Workshop has been to keep kids writing. To this end, do not stress grammar, spelling or punctuation – this is NOT a remedial English class! Also, stress that the writing is their choice; it can be poetry or prose and they can start with the ideas you give them and take them ANYWHERE; just keep writing!</p> <p>WEEK 1</p> <p>Preparation: Write the “bland sentence” in #4 (below) on a blackboard or poster, write the motto: Writers WRITE!</p> <p>1) Introduce yourself and the teens to one another. Introduce the motto and the purpose, and make sure they know they are not to focus on grammar and spelling, and that they have the freedom to write what they want. Everyone will be encouraged to share their writing with the group, but no one will be forced to speak.</p> <p>2) Ask the writers to write down three or four sentences about anything. After you’ve done this, scramble the words, writing them down randomly, repeating them, and mixing them up. Next, try to punctuate the words, turning them into several new sentences. Ask for volunteers to read their new, mixed-up, silly sentences, with expression.</p> <p>3) Say, or write on the blackboard, “She picked a flower.” Ask each writer to describe the flower brought to mind. Writing is a process of making the unspecific concrete, by adding the details of the senses.</p> <p>4) Give the writers a bland, bare-bones skeleton of a story, such as the following: “He had a book. He put it down. He went to the kitchen. Something strange happened.” Each writer should then</p>

rewrite the story, adding details that will tell the reader the setting, the character's mood, and what happened. Be colorful! Be specific!

## WEEK 2

Preparations: You might want to go over Week One's writing and share good examples of colorful detail. This is done without specifying who had written the examples.

- 1) Talk is the exercise ground for writing. Ask each writer to tell a story – what happened to him/her this week?
- 2) Ask the writers to write three short poems, just three lines each, about anything they can think of. The title of the poem should identify the subject. The poem should not repeat the subject title, but add to it by description and/or action. Ask for volunteers to share their poems.
- 3) Ask your writers to write about some strongly felt emotion or feeling. They should try to write so that the reader experiences the emotion, without the writer using the word “afraid”, “angry” or “passionate”.

## WEEK 3

Preparation: On small slips of paper, three for each writer, write a word or words to identify a subject: books or a book, a box, a large dog, etc. Mix these up in a hat, box or bag. If you do not have bushes in sight out of a window, draw some bushes on a blackboard or poster.

- 1) Point to the bushes and say, “Someone is in the bushes! Who do you see? Write about them.” They should spend about ten minutes writing a description or story. Ask them to share.
- 2) Have your writers each pick three slips from the hat. They then have five minutes to write with the first subject as the “starter” and going off from there in any direction. After five minutes, switch to the next subject, and the third. Share?
- 3) Take the letters in your name and create a new name. Have this “new you” write a few sentences about yourself. (Janet Dickey=Deejay T. Nick)



4) For the next week: ask the kids to bring in “props” such as hats, ties, scarves, masks and jewelry.

#### WEEK 4

Preparation: Gather up a few props to add to those the kids bring in. Have the kids dress in various props to “feel different” while they write.

1) Write about “What I did on my summer vacation”. However, choose one of these variations: write it as a poem; write it as though you’re not on this planet; or write it as though you’re the family pet. Concentrate on the sight, sound, feel, smell and taste. The “I” in your story doesn’t even have to be you. Share?

2) “Verbs have power.” Have each writer take a piece of paper and fold it in half lengthwise. Write a list of ten nouns on the left half. Flip the paper over to the right side and write the name of an occupation on the right half, then a list of 12-15 verbs that describe actions that go with that occupation. Finally, open up the page and try to match the nouns and verbs on the two lists to come up with sentences that have fresh, new combinations of nouns and verbs. Share?

3) Have the writers spend five minutes writing a dream sequence that ends, “but then he/she woke up and realized it was only a dream.” Now they should rewrite, but it’s no dream, so how can it be realistically resolved? There’s no escape, each writer must deal with the situation he/she created. Share?

4. Voluntary homework: Go someplace different to write. Begin by describing the surroundings, then look up and add a character to your setting. *You can write anywhere!*

#### WEEK 5

Preparation: Cut phrases from a newspaper or magazine, two or three for each writer, such as “After a long, hard day”, “Quiet, dreamy Francis”, “Complimentary refreshments”

1) Tell everyone: close your eyes. In your mind, walk up twenty steps, open the door. Now open

your eyes and write what you see. Share?

2) Have each writer pick three phrases from the hat. Write about one or all of them, separately or in combination. Go anywhere. Share?

3) What is it like to fly? Be a bird, butterfly, angel or pilot. Fly a spaceship or sprout wings. Share?

4) Ask the writers to suggest ideas to use as starters for next week. Also, if you are planning to publish their writing, let them know that they should pick what they would like to have published. (Decide ahead if you will limit the number of individual pieces.) After choosing what they would like to have published, the writers should type their pieces neatly and edit grammar, spelling, etc. It's a good idea to read each piece out loud.

#### WEEK 6

Preparation: Set up a display of books on writing and getting published, along with collections of poetry and short stories and magazines dedicated to writing.

1) Give the writers an ending, such as "when the smoke cleared, we held hands and looked at each other." The writers must get to that ending any way they can.

2) Write a "what if" story or poem. What if I were in charge of the U.S? What if pigs could fly? This is designed to be a wild, fanciful flight of the imagination!

3) Use an idea or two from those submitted the previous week, or try some group stories: each person starts a story by writing a few lines, and then she passes the story to the next person, who adds to the story and passes it along until the last one to have each story tries to write an ending. Read the resulting stories.

4) Ask for evaluations. If you've made a bibliography of writing books, magazines and websites, pass those out. Let them know when the booklet will be ready and how they can get their copy. Tell them to keep writing.

## Discover Your Thoughts through Journaling

Suggested Ages	Jr. High and High School
Suggested Reading	<p><u>A Book of Your Own: Keeping a Diary or Journal</u> by Carla Stevens <u>Write It Down!</u> by Erica Smith <u>Write Where You Are: How to Use Writing to Make Sense of Your Life</u> by Caryn Miriam-Goldberg</p> <p>Fiction <u>Dear Great American Writers School</u> by Sherry Bunin <u>Bronx Masquerade</u> by Nikki Grimes <u>Jazmin's Notebook</u> by Nikki Grimes <u>My Angelica</u> by Carol Lynch Williams <u>Shakespeare Bats Cleanup</u> by Ron Koertge <u>What My Mother Doesn't Know</u> by Sonya Sones <u>TTYL</u> (Talk to you later) by Lauren Myracle</p>
Suggested Websites	<p><a href="http://www.quote garden.com/writing.html">www.quote garden.com/writing.html</a> <a href="http://teenwriting.about.com/teens/teenwriting/">http://teenwriting.about.com/teens/teenwriting/</a> <a href="http://www.webenglishteacher.com/creative.html">www.webenglishteacher.com/creative.html</a> <a href="http://www.lori.ri.gov/youthserv/yart/ya_poetr.php">www.lori.ri.gov/youthserv/yart/ya_poetr.php</a> <a href="http://teenink.com/Poetry/">http://teenink.com/Poetry/</a></p>
Materials Needed	<p>CD cases Scrap paper or wrapping paper or magazines Permanent Marker Acrylic Paint (Optional) Metallic or Black paper CD Pencil Scissors Glue</p>
Display	<p>Find inspiring quotations about writing and display them around a poster that says: "Writers Write!" Display writers' biographies, and poetry books; Shel Silverstein is popular for all ages.</p>
Program	<p>Create a secret journal with CD cases 1) Remove the cover art from the CD case. You'll need to carefully remove the inside plastic where the CD usually sits in order to take out the back art. Draw several designs on scrap paper until you find one that you really like. Draw your</p>

favorite design with marker on all sides of case.  
2) Fill in the design with the paint and let the case dry. You may want to apply a second coat of paint after the first has dried completely. \*\*Instead of paint, you can use permanent markers, or you can glue a collage of pictures to the covers.

3) Make the booklet that will go inside the case the same way you would make paper dolls or a string of snowflakes. Fold the metallic or black paper like an accordion so it is as wide as the CD. If you use black paper, you can use colored gel pens for writing.

4) Trace the edge and inner circle of the CD onto the folded stack of paper so the edge of the CD lines up with each side of the paper.

5) Hold the folded paper together with one hand and cut the CD shape from it with the other. Be sure to leave 1 inch (2.5 cm) of the paper uncut on the left and right sides of the stack so the folded paper stays connected.

6) Set the booklet in the case and trim it to fit like a real CD. Glue the last page to the inside of the case (where the CD would go) so it does not fall out. These journals can be personalized, and it is fun to write in a circle. Have teens copy a poem from some popular writer like Shel Silverstein.  
(Adapted from Earth-Friendly Crafts for Kids, 50 Awesome Things to Make with Recycled Stuff by Heather Smith and Joe Thatigan)

Survey the teens in your community about what type of writing workshop they want: journal, poetry, short stories, or creative writing. Invite a local writer, teacher or professor to present a two to three hour workshop on the most requested topic. Or do it yourself with ideas from "Creative Writing-Six Weeks Short".